UPANAHA SWEDANA – AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract: Upanaha Sweda is one among the commonly practiced modalities of treatment in Ayurveda. It is mainly used for the Shamana purpose and is highly beneficial in cases of pain and inflammation. Due to its prolonged application time, the effect is also observed to be highly efficacious. As the varied references of Upanaha Sweda are essential for understanding the different types and indications, this article tries to compile the scattered knowledge and help in its application.

KEYWORDS: Upanaha Sweda, Upakrama, Chikitsa.

INTRODUCTION

The Chikitsa in Ayurveda is basically of three types namely Antahparimarjana (Internal applications), Bahrparimarjana (External applications) and Shastropranidhana (Use of Shastras/Instruments). Upanaha Sweda comes under the banner of Bahrparimarjana Chikitsa as it is to be applied externally. It is also considered under Shad Upakrama and Lepa chikitsa. Upanaha Sweda is one of its kind due to its applicability as both Saagni (with usage of heat) and Niragni (without usage of heat) varieties of Sweda. In order to understand the concept of Upanaha, it is of utmost importance to know in detail about Swedana Karma.

Criteria for selection of Swedana Karma

Each type of Swedana has its own indication and its efficacy varies depending on the various factors like the Dosha, Rtu, Vyadhi Bala, age etc. Determining these based on the Samhitta are as follows:

According to predominance of Dosha[1]

In Kapha predominant diseases – Taapa, Ushma Sweda
In Pitta predominant diseases – Drava Sweda
In Vata predominant diseases – Upanaha Sweda

According to Rutu, Vyadhi bala & Vyadhita bala[2]

Mahaan Sweda is indicated in Mahaan vyadhi, Shita rutu, Utama atura bala.
Madhyama Sweda is indicated in Madhyama vyadhi bala, Madhyama atura bala.
Mrudu Sweda is indicated in Alpa vyadhi, Ushna kala & Alpa atura bala.

According to the age of individual[3]

Hasta Sweda in new born baby.

According to the site of body affected[4]

Mrudu Sweda in Vankshana, Hrudaya and Chakshu region.

According to use of heating modalities[5]

Saagni Sweda – The usage of heat is used for the preparation of medicine.

Niragni Sweda – Heat is not applied directly for the preparation. Rather, the qualities of the drug play an important role here. It is indicated in MedaKapha Avarana conditions.

According to Sthanika and Agantuja dosha[6]

When the Vata gets displaced to the Amashaya, initially Raksha Sweda is to be administered followed by Snigdha Sweda. Amashaya is the seat of Kapha Dosha and Vata Dosha is the Agantuja Dosha here. After treating the Sthanika Dosha (Kapha), Vata Dosha is to be treated. If Snigdha Sweda is administered, then it will provoke the Kapha Dosha and worsen the condition. Hence, Raksha Sweda is performed first and followed by the Snigdha Sweda. Similarly, when the Kapha Dosha has moved to the Pakwashaya, Snigdha Sweda is administered first followed by Raksha Sweda. Agantuja Dosha is always treated after considering and treating the Sthanika Dosha.

Abhyantara Swedana

Oral administration of some drugs is said to have Swedajanaka property.
Drugs having Ushna, Teekshna, Ruksha, Sara, Drava, Snigdha are opined to induce Swedana. Intake of Dravya possessing all or some of the qualities are mentioned for the purpose of Swedajanana. Caraka Samhitta mentions Bahupana as a variety of Niragni Sweda. Madhyya by virtue of its Ushna, Teekshna and Ruksha Guna brings about Swedana in the person. Intake of Ushnaajala is advised in fever to produce Swedana, Vatanulomana, Deepana, Pachana. Abhyantara Swedana is indicated in Kushta along with drugs like Bakuchi, Bhallataka, and Chitraka.

**Upanaha Sweda**

**Definition**
The word “Upanaha” means “To tie/cover/.wrap”.[7] The other meanings of the term Upanaha include “The act of application of paste in the form of kalka”. [8] It is also called as Pralepa. (ShabdhaKalpaDruma). It is a mode of fomentation in the form of application of medicinal drugs.[9] It also means application of different drugs in a specific form for the purpose of Shamanam of wound.[10] It is to be applied as a thick Lepa over the diseased part and tied with the help of a leather piece.[11]

**Perspectives**

Upanaha Sweda is considered under Bandha and Lepa in Vachaspayam and Shabdakalpadruma; Caraka Samhitta, Ashtanga Hridaya, Ashtanga Sangrahya and Kashyapa Samhitta considers it under Bandha; Sushruta Samhitta and Bhavaprakasha Nighantu considers it under Pradeha and Bandha.

According to Sushruta Samhitta there are 3 types of Lepd[12] based on the method of application:

1. **Pralepa**
Pralepa can be applied in cold form, thin and it can be removed as soon as it gets dried (Avishoshi) or allowed to remain even after drying (Vishoshi) as per the requirement.

2. **Pradeha**
Pradeha can be applied hot or cold, thick and is removed soon after drying.

3. **Alepa**
Alepa falls in between Pradeha and Pralepa i.e. of medium thickness.

It can be applied hot or cold, is neither too thin nor too thick, can be removed soon after drying or can be allowed to remain for some time even after drying.

**Types**

- **Upanaha Sweda** on the basis of heating modality:
  - **Sagni Upanaha** – Here the drugs are heated first and then applied.
  - **Niragni Upanaha** – Ushna virya drugs are applied without heating.

Upanaha Sweda on the basis of nature of drugs used:

- **Snigdha** – Sneha Dravyas are used in the preparation.
- **Ruksha** – In Sama Vyadhi like Amavata Sneha Dravyas are not used. eg Karisha.

Upanaha Sweda on the basis of the body part involved in Swedana: (Ch.Su. 14/66)

**Ekanga** – Applied locally over the affected part.

**Sarvanga** – Swedana is performed to the whole body.

**Sarvangupa** – Swedana Sweda on the basis of treatment modality:

- **Shamshamaniya Sweda** – For the Shamana purpose, only Shodhanangabhuta. It is not used as a pre-operative procedure of Shodhana.

- **Mrudu** – Madhyama Sweda -It comes under Mrudu (Niragni Upanaha) to Madhyama (Sagni Upanaha) variety of Sweda.

**Shirobasti Prakara**[13] – Masthika Upanaha quoting some anonymous references Chakrapani observed Upanaha as Shirobasti Prakara calling it as Mastishkya.

**Source materials of Upanaha Sweda**

All Samhitta have mentioned separately the materials to be used for Upanaha Sweda. The drugs which are used for the purpose of Sankara Sweda are also included in the group of Upanaha Sweda.[14] Infact the name Upanaha Sweda is given on the basis of its procedure whereas Sankara Sweda is named on basis of its character as it is prepared by mixing several drugs together. Caraka Samhitta has specified the use of Gandha pradhana dravyas in Upanaha Sweda along with ample quantity of Lavana and Sneha.[15] Sushruta Samhitta has also mentioned separately Salvanopanaha in Vatayadhi Chikitsa where Saindava Lavana is added more.[16]

Ashtanga Hridaya[17] and Sushruta Samhitta[18] have mentioned drugs to be used according to Doshas:

In Pittanugata Vata with – Kakolyadigana dravyas/ Padmakadi gana dravyas

In Kaphanugata Vata with – Surasadigana dravyas

In Vayu Vata with – Krushara, Veshavara, Salvanopanaha.

**Classification of Upanaha Sweda Dravyas:**

Overall assessment of drugs recommended for Upanaha Sweda gives a hint to classify them broadly into 3 groups:

**Food materials** – like Godhuma, Yava, Masha and their preparations like Payasa, Krushara and also milk, Dadhi, Amla Pishtha, Veshavara are all included in the group of food materials. Mostly, these are Snigdha in quality and therefore used in Sagni Upanaha. Heat retention is comparatively for more duration.
Plant source – various herbs and different parts of the plant are also used and selection of plants depends on the disease and Dosha involved. Vatahara mula and Patras are used.

Excreta – dungs of donkey, horse, cow are told to be used. These organic substances are good heat retainers, therefore, their utility in Swedana is more.

Commentator Indu[79] mentioned that the drugs can be used individually or in combination depending upon condition of disease.

Preparation of Upanaha Sweda
Drugs
Vata shamaka Dravyas, Kapha shamaka Dravyas, Gandha Dravya, Amla Dravya, Saindhava Lavana, Sneha Dravya, Godhuma churna, Yava churna, Masha churna, Karisha of cow, donkey, etc. are selected according to the disease and condition of the patient and are made into a fine paste by grinding or crushing the fresh leaves all together into a Kalka form by mixing little amount of hot water, Veshavara, Sneha, etc.

Heating
Sagni Upanaha - The prepared medicinal paste must be heated before application.

Niragni Upanaha - Drugs which are having hot potency are taken and applied without heating. They block the body temperature and do the sudation.[80]

Procedure
Upanaha Sweda can be performed in 3 ways:
Bandhana
Pinda
Pradeha

1. Bandhana
In this variety, Vatahara drugs along with Amla dravya (Kanji), Saindhava lavana, Sneha Dravasy should be made hot, applied over the affected part and tied.

Caraka Samhita[21] mentioned the use of Charma patta for tying which is of Ushna veerya. In the absence of above, Kausheya (silk) or Avika Sataka (woolen blanket) and Vatahara Patras are mentioned for purpose of tying.

Sushruta Samhitta, Ashtanga Hridaya, Ashtanga Sangraha, Kashyapa Samhitta and Bhavaprakasha Nighantu have mentioned about Bandhana method of Upanaha Sweda.

2. Pinda
Drugs are made into bolus form or Krushhara, Payasa, Utkarika, Veshavara are prepared and made into a bolus form. This is made into a Pinda and sudation is performed.[22] This can be used as Sarvanga or Ekanga Sweda. Sankara variety of Sweda mentioned in Caraka Samhitta will also come under this category.

Commentator Dalhana opines that Sankara Sweda mentioned in Caraka Samhitta is also Upanaha Sweda.[23]

3. Pradeha
Vatahara drugs mixed with Amla Dravya, Lavana and Sneha Dravya should be made hot and applied in the form of a thick paste (Pradeha) over the body without Bandhana.[24] In case of drugs possessing Ushna Veerya, Upanaha Sweda is performed without heating. Bhavaprakasha Nighantu,[25] also mentioned to apply in the form of Pradeha and Pralepa. Indu[26] also opines that Upanaha Sweda should be done by repeated application of Pradeha/ Pralepa to the body. Swedana has to be performed repeatedly. That means the drugs applied for Upanaha when gets cooled should be removed and again fresh Lepa should be applied.

Methodology of Lepa Application[27]
Sushruta Samhitta and Sharangadhara Samhitta are of the opinion that Lepa should be applied in opposite direction of hair follicles. Lepa applied in this direction stays for long duration and helps for easy absorption of Veerya of medicine into the body. Lepa applied should completely cover the Romakupa. By this method, the Veerya of Lepa easily enter the Romakupa and from there into the body.

Thickness of Lepa
Sharangadhara Samhitta[28] has directly mentioned the thickness of Doshagna, Vishagna and Varnya Lepa in Anguli Pramana as 1/4th, 1/3th and 1/2th Angula respectively.

Sushruta Samhitta[29] states that Pradeha is the thickest form of Lepa, Alepa is of medium thickness and Pralepa is the thinnest form of Lepa.

Sushruta Samhitta opines that the thickness of Lepa application on the skin should be equal to that of thickness of a buffalo’s skin.

Commentator Chakrapani opines that the thickness of Pradeha should be equal to the thickness of Ardra Mahisha Charma and Alepa should be thinner than that of buffalo’s skin.

Based on this, Pradeha should be applied in thickness equal to the buffalo’s skin and the thickness of Alepa should be less than that of buffalo’s skin.

Duration
Ashtanga Hridaya[30] and Sushruta Samhitta opine that the Upanaha Sweda applied in the night should be removed next day morning and that applied in day should be removed at night.

Commentator Indu[31] opines that the medicinal paste should be changed twice a day or it should be applied...
repeatedly with due consideration regarding Desha, Kala and Dosha.

Kashyapa Samhita[32] mentions that one should remove the applied Lepa when it becomes cool and should be applied again. Sweda will occur after many such applications.

Precautions[33]
The once used medicinal paste (Lepa) should not be used again. Similarly, an unused prepared medicinal paste kept for long time should be discarded. Further, fresh paste should be applied after removing previous medicinal paste. If these instructions are not followed, then it may cause burning sensation in area of application and disease may progress further because of inaction of Lepa due to decrease in potency.

Specific indications of Upanaha Sweda
Different Upanaha Sweda are indicated in Vata Vyadhi and change in ingredients for diseases like Ardita,[34] Khalid[35] etc. are stated.

Sushruta Samhita mentions 4 varieties of Sweda and opines that Upanaha SWeda is mainly used as Vatahara[36] Other Samhitta mentions Upanaha Sweda in case of Vata Vikara.

Sushruta Samhitta[37] also states that Upanaha Sweda is specifically indicated in case of Sankuchayanana – contractures

Rajartha – Pain predominant condition
Stabdhaagatra – stiffness.

Commentator Indu[38] mentioned Agni Sanskara Rahita Upanaha i.e. Upanaha Sweda prepared without heating to be done in case of Vata associated with Pitta.

Contra-indication
Commentator Dalhana on Susruta Samhitta opines that Upanaha Sweda is mainly contraindicated in Pitta-Rakta Avarana conditions.[39]

Mode of action of Upanaha Sweda
Upanaha Sweda has wider action based on the drug used, thickness, etc. This can be explained as follows:
Among the Panchamahabhutas, Vayu Mahabhuta is predominant in Twak. Hence, Sparshanendriya is capable of perceiving different types of sensations. Bhrajaka Pitta which is one among the 5 varieties of Pitta is present in Twak and its function is Twak Bhrajana. Abhyanga and Swedana which are administered externally are digested by Bhrajaka Pitta.

Sushruta Samhitta explains that Tiryak Dhamani divides into numerous branches and covers the body like a network and their openings are attached to Romakupa. Through them, only the Veeryas of Lepa, Abhyanga, Parisheka, Avagaha etc. enter into the body after undergoing Paka with Bhrajaka Pitta in skin. This highlights the systemic absorption of the drug applied over the skin. Thus, it can be said that Veerya of drugs used in Upanaha Sweda get absorbed through the skin and produce action.[40]

CONCLUSION
Upanaha Sweda is a fool proof and easy to administer procedure at both OPD and IPD levels. Depending on the nature of the patient and the disease, the type of Upanaha Sweda along with its duration should be decided.

REFERENCES


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